

Fate of the Adepts by Kyarorain

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Summary:

A man who came to rule Tolbi desires to get rid of every Adept in the world. The Adepts must band together to defeat a great foe.

1. Chapter 1

Fate of the Adepts

I originally had this fanfic up a few years ago, but it was written really badly and was only one chapter long, so I removed it. However, the storyline was too good to pass up so now I'm rehashing the fic and putting it back up. It will definitely be more than one chapter this time.

Camelot owns Golden Sun!

It had come to a shock to the people of Tolbi when the long-time ruler, Lord Babi, had eventually passed away in his bed without warning. For even the oldest residents of the city, Babi had been around as long as they could remember, ruling over the people and making sure that Tolbi was efficiently run and prospered well.

After Babi died, his loyal retainer Iodem had taken over the city in Babi's place and Tolbi continued to remain a rich, stable city with a large population, all of whom were content with their new ruler.

Two months into his new position, Iodem was surprised when an estranged relative of his, his long-lost brother named Rodan, had turned up out of the blue and sought to make amends with him. He had seemed especially keen on repairing their relationship. Since he was family after all, Iodem was happy to be able to become close again.

After a few more months, Iodem named Rodan as the man who would succeed him if he could ever no longer carry out his duty of running the city. This was all his older brother needed. Iodem had never once suspected that Rodan had an ulterior motive behind his sudden return, until Rodan led him out to the Tolbi dock by the Karagol sea one night. It was silent and deserted, and nobody heard Iodem's scream or saw the struggle as Rodan slit his brother's throat and threw him into the sea.

Iodem had been found the next day, drifting by the shore face down with a bloody cut in his throat. He had clearly been dead for hours. The people of Tolbi mourned bitterly as yet another leader passed on. Rodan graciously accepted Iodem's position and made a speech to the people of Tolbi about how devastated he was at his brother's death and how he was honoured that he could carry on the task that Iodem had worked so hard on.

When Rodan returned to the castle after making the speech, he shut himself in his room and stood in front of his mirror upon his dressing table. He looked at his smirking face reflected in the mirror and then let out a menacing laugh. Now he had Tolbi in his grip and an army of his own. Now it was time to wreck the city and the people that Babi had loved so much and to get rid of other things too.

Babi had been very interested in a race of people known as Adepts. This had been clear from his written works and what Iodem had said to him as they talked together. Babi had even been acquainted with a group of four Adepts led by a man named Isaac and it seemed that two of these Adepts, Isaac included, had come from a place named Vale. Kraden, Babi's favourite scholar, also stayed in Vale to study Alchemy, which was supposedly connected to these Adepts. This strongly indicated Vale was a very good place to start

when it came to persecuting these Adepts. He swore he was going to hunt them down, using his strong army of Tolbians, and the Adepts would all be destroyed.

The journey to save the world had been completed several months before and now Vale had been rebuilt after it sank when Alchemy was unleashed. The valeans had all settled in comfortably and the companions of the four Valeans who travelled around the world were staying at Vale's inn for a while, before they would inevitably decide about whether they remained or went back to their respective hometowns.

Ivan lay awake in bed, gazing up at the gap in the curtains where he could just see the night sky. He thought of Kalay and Contigo, a place where he had grown up and a place where he was born. He would go home someday, but which one was home? With the people who had raised him or his long-lost sister? Ivan let out a small sigh and rolled over, pulling up the cover and closing his eyes. He had been thinking more about the matter the longer he spent in Vale. Surely they would be expecting him to leave and return home anytime soon, he could hardly overstay his welcome.

Soon, the troubled Jupiter Adept drifted off into sleep.

The dream started with his sister, Hama. Ivan was watching her across a dark, empty space. The wind buffeted at them as they stood a few metres apart. Hama was looking at him with a serious gaze.

"Ivan," Hama's voice came to him, slightly distorted by the sharp breeze. "This is not just a dream!"

"Sister?" Ivan stumbled forwards in confusion. "Are you really... there?"

"I'm contacting you in your dreams," Hama called out to him. "I have sensed terrible danger and I have to warn you before it's too late!"

"Terrible danger?" Ivan echoed, his eyes widening in surprise. What could she mean by terrible danger?

"I must show you what I have seen," Hama walked forwards and took him by the hand. "Relax and close your eyes."

Ivan did as she ordered, his forehead furrowing in worry. What could be so dangerous that she had to warn him from so far away like this?

"This could be the future," Hama warned, placing her hand over Ivan's forehead. She flashed with Psynergy and closed her eyes, channeling her thoughts into Ivan, projecting what her premonitions had told her so that Ivan could see them for himself.

Isaac sat in the hollow of a tree, sketching on a piece of paper. He was looking intently at it, entirely peaceful in his situation. A voice called out to him, distracting him from his work. Isaac rose to his feet and walked over, greeting Mia with a kiss. She smiled happily, placing a hand upon her gently swelling belly.

Ivan understood, this was Isaac and Mia of the future, just a few years older. Hama was showing the future after all.

Next he saw Gareth and Jenna sitting by the river, their arms around each other. They talked happily and laughed together. Occasionally, one of them would kiss the other. Clearly, this couple was also very much in love.

Then there were Felix and Sheba, also happily together, walking along a path, Felix hugging Sheba to his side with one arm.

Piers appeared as well, sailing his ship on the sea with a look of contentment on his face.

Ivan saw himself in Vale, presumably visiting his friends.

"What you have seen so far," Hama's voice interrupted the flow of thoughts, "Is a happy future. However, the happiness will not last. Prepare yourself, Ivan, what you're about to see will shock you."

Ivan drew in a sharp breath and tensed. "I'm ready."

"Mia!" The loud scream was the first thing Ivan heard before he even had time to see what was going on in front of him. His gaze slowly focused on the scene and he let out a quiet gasp. A frantic crowd was surging in front of him, forming into a rough circle. Isaac was struggling to break in but he was repeatedly being shoved back, kicked or hit. Ivan saw what was making Isaac so frantic. Mia was standing in the centre of the circle, her face smudged with dirt and streaked with tears. Even her dress was dirty and torn in places. A few bruises were forming on her arms and one on her face. The crowd were jeering and booing at her. One person struck out with a stick and smacked Mia on the back, causing her to cry out in pain. A tall man with a tangled beard obscuring his face stepped forwards, brandishing a sword.

Mia gasped and backed away, her hands reaching out to clutch her stomach. The sword suspended over her and she looked around frantically, seeking out an escape route. Two people stepped forwards and grabbed her, holding her to the spot. Mia struggled and screamed for Isaac, who shouted back. Someone was forcefully holding Isaac, preventing him from getting to her.

The sword plunged downwards, going straight through Mia's chest and penetrating her until the tip came out her back. Ivan let out a cry of horror, watching Mia fall to the ground in a pool of her blood. Isaac was finally released and he ran to her, crying out her name. Mia raised her head, whispered something and then her head fell back down.

"No! Mia!" Isaac screamed, grabbing her body and cradling it, sobbing in grief. He did not see the person looming up behind him, a thick spear in hand. Ivan wanted to cry out, to warn him, but he understood that he was only seeing this. He wasn't actually there at all. All he could do was watch in shock as the spear was plunged into Isaac, penetrating his heart. Isaac fell silent, looking down in shock at the circle of blood that blossomed upon his shirt. His mouth flapped open, not making a sound. He slowly pitched forwards, falling on top of Mia. The crowd laughed mockingly at the dead couple and kicked their bodies before walking away and leaving the two to lie in their blood.

"I am afraid it doesn't end there," Hama said bitterly.

"I can keep going," Ivan whispered. "I have to see it."

Ivan next saw Jenna being forced to the ground by two people, a crowd gathering around her as they watched on. Ivan saw that they were pushing her down and forcing her head onto a block of wood. Another person stood by, holding

an axe in their hand. Ivan sharply breathed in, realising what was happening. He looked around bleakly, seeing Gareth and Felix trying to get into the crowd. They were having no better luck than Isaac. Sheba was also there, hanging back with tears streaking down her face.

Jenna was screaming. The axe hung over her in the air.

"No..." Ivan whispered. "How awful..."

A loud thud and the cutting off of a scream signalled the loss of another. The crowd pushed Gareth in, allowing him to cradle Jenna's body in his arms. The axeman stood over him and prepared to swing again. Felix shouted out a warning, but Gareth did not move fast enough in his grief. The crowd laughed. Felix hesitated but chose to hurry away with Sheba, people yelling insults at his back and shaking his fist.

"Why are we being treated like this?" Ivan cried out.

Even more deaths followed. Ivan endured the horror of watching Piers be hung from gallows, Sheba burned at the stake, Felix shot with several arrows, and he, himself, beaten and thrown in the river to drown.

The last thing he saw was Vale, a burned out wreckage, all the houses and greenery destroyed by fire. There was nobody alive in the village. It was an empty ghost town full of burned out buildings.

Ivan snapped out of the trance once Hamma removed her hand from his forehead and cut off the connection. He looked tearfully up at her, opening his mouth to ask just one single question.

"Why?" Ivan asked, his voice barely above a whisper.

"Tolbi is responsible for this," Hama pressed her lips together grimly. "A madman came to rule over Tolbi. He learned of us, Adepts, thanks to what he heard from Lord Babi and then Iodem. He never had respect for Babi when he ruled Tolbi and when he gained control, he was determined to get rid of all Adepts since Babi was fond of them, especially Isaac. The new ruler of Tolbi instructed his scholars to research us and our powers, Psynergy. With what the people of Tolbi learned, he was able to find a way to defend himself and his army from our powers. In the future, all the Adepts will be wiped out, because they will be almost powerless against the army. Their Psynergy will have no effect."

"So... Tolbi wants to get rid of Adepts?" Ivan exclaimed in horror.

"Just one man," Hama replied. "But the army is under his command. He simply has to order them to get rid of people like us."

"I see..." Ivan swallowed. "We have to stop this man before he kills us all."

"That's right," Hama nodded. "His name is Rodan and he is currently the ruler of Tolbi. After Babi's death, Iodem took over, but just a few months ago, Iodem was murdered. Ever since, Rodan has been plotting against Adepts. He may already have a way to defend against Psynergy... the army may be nearly ready... but no matter what, you must hurry and stop him."

"I understand," Ivan swallowed. "I'll tell everyone and we'll stop this from happening!"

"Good luck, Ivan," Hama reached out and briefly hugged him. "I look forwards to seeing you sometime soon."

"Me too," Ivan replied.

The dream faded out and Ivan woke up, gazing up at the ceiling in the darkness. Tomorrow morning, he would tell everyone what he had seen.

They had to save their entire race from being wiped out by Tolbi's insane ruler.

Ivan let out a sigh and closed his eyes, drifting off into a fitful sleep flooded with nightmares.

2. Chapter 2

Fate of the Adepts

Ok, next chapter here... and I have a way for Tolbi to defend themselves. ... I didn't in the old version of the fic. My writing was rather flawed back then... heh. I guess I took a long time to update. This may get to be a habit. And normally I update my stories fast.

Camelot owns Golden Sun.

Ivan awoke from his disturbed slumber and sat up in bed, yawning as he rubbed his eyes. He got to his feet and walked to the window, peering outside to look at the village. Few people were out yet since it was still morning and the place was peaceful and quiet. Ivan pressed his forehead against the window, looking worried, as he recalled his dream vision last night. He couldn't let that happen to Vale.

After he'd had breakfast and everyone was up and about, Ivan wasted no time in calling his friends together for a talk. It was time to tell everyone else what he had seen so hopefully they could deal with it before it was too late.

"What do you want to talk to us about?" Gareth asked, looking annoyed and a little tired. "I'd just got out of bed too when you sent Isaac in to get me. And I haven't had my breakfast yet."

"Ivan says it's important," Isaac said. "Anyway, Garet, you can have your breakfast when he's finished talking. Don't complain so much."

"You look very worried, Ivan," Sheba said, noticing the grim anxiety on Ivan's face. "Has something happened?"

"I had a dream last night," Ivan said. "Well, no, not exactly a dream."

"Ivan, you just called us here to tell us about your dream?" Mia said, perplexed.

"Hama came to me in a dream," Ivan said. "She said it wasn't just a dream, she really was contacting me. She showed me some things."

"What kind of things?" Piers asked.

"The future," Ivan said. "Hama showed me the future. At first, it was happy and pleasant. But then it changed. Everything was in chaos. We were getting killed... by the same people."

"What people?" Jenna asked, looking slightly alarmed. "And they killed us?"

"People from Tolbi," Ivan replied. "Tolbi's entire army. They were persecuting Adepts all over the world, executing them. Even us. We couldn't do anything against them. We were all slaughtered. According to Hama, that's what may happen in our future."

Silence fell over the group as everyone took in Ivan's words, considering what he had just said.

"I don't believe that," Felix said finally. "How can they possibly have anything against us?"

"Yeah, Felix's right," Garet said. "We're superior to them. We're Adepts! We have powers!"

"But Hama said... they..." Ivan said weakly, trying to remember her exact words. "There was a way to... defend against our..."

"Ivan, maybe it really was just a dream," Jenna said doubtfully. "Because I don't think we could be defeated that easily."

"What Hama showed you probably won't even happen," Isaac said encouragingly. "It could be true, but I don't see how Tolbi could defeat us so easily. We have Psynergy. They don't. That's the difference."

"But..." Ivan protested.

"I can't believe I delayed breakfast for this," Garet said in disgust, walking away. "I'm going back home."

"Ivan, don't feel bad," Sheba said sympathetically. "If it helps, I think I believe you. Isaac, everyone, we should still be on our guard, right?"

"I can't believe this," Ivan said in frustration. "I saw that future. There had to be a way for Tolbi to overpower us somehow. Tolbi is being ruled by a crazy man who just wants to get rid of us!"

"So what do you want us to do?" Felix asked. "Go to Tolbi and beat him up?"

"How would we look, just running in there and harming Tolbi's leader because someone was told in a dream that he was dangerous?" Isaac said. "It would be best to wait until we have a reason. What you said worries me, but we can't take action until something happens."

"I guess you're right," Ivan said with a heavy sigh. "But I believe Hama was really showing me the bad future."

The Adepts dispersed, all of them thinking about Ivan's warning. Indeed, there was a ring of truth to it, yet it didn't seem all that possible. How could an army of ordinary humans possibly have the skills to match them?

Three weeks had passed since Hama had shared her premonitions with Ivan in his dream. Mostly everyone had almost forgotten about Ivan's warning, since so much time had passed without anything happening, but Ivan was still on his guard. He was worried about Tolbi and what had been predicted, he couldn't let it happen.

It frustrated him how nobody had taken the warning seriously, but he supposed they couldn't do anything at this point. It was no use running to Tolbi and accusing the lord of Tolbi of trying to wipe Adepts out. If he just denied it, there was nothing they could do.

Ivan sat on a tree stump near the village gate, calmly meditating as he sat still. The wind rustled past him, whispering into his ear, as he called it to him. Normally, the wind was peaceful and calming to listen to, but today he sensed discord in the wind. Danger was coming. Ivan frowned, feeling perplexed, as he struggled to listen to the wind. Just what was wrong?

He heard the soft thud of the gate opening and banging against the fence that held it in place. Ivan's eyes flew open,

his gaze fixing onto the village entrance. Who was entering Vale? Was that what the wind was attempting to tell him?

Two men walked right into the village, the sunlight glinting off their smooth, polished armor. Their faces could not be easily seen beneath the helmets that they wore. Both men brandished large spears built of thick wood with metal fixtures on top. Their metal feet thudded heavily on the ground as they walked.

Ivan froze in shock, his blood running cold through his veins, as he saw the two men. They were obviously warriors. No, not just average warriors. With that expensive looking equipment and those spears, they had to be soldiers.

"Tolbi soldiers?" Ivan whispered tremulously, slipping off the tree stump and quietly walking up, his wary gaze never once leaving the soldiers.

"So this is Vale?" One of the soldiers asked, his bearded chin wobbling with amusement. "It sure doesn't look like much."

"A village of pesky Adepts," the other soldier said, regarding the villagers with a sneer as they looked at the soldiers in consternation. "Come on, let's give them a taste of what they are going to get."

Ivan drew in a sharp breath and ran forward, a feeling of dread creeping up his spine. Now he knew that it was definitely true, these soldiers were from Tolbi and trying to harm the villagers. One man had already grabbed a woman by the arm and raised his spear when Ivan reached them.

"Stop!" Ivan yelled, flinging a bolt of lightning at the soldier who was holding the shocked woman. He released the woman, who hurried away, and glanced at his wrist. Ivan noticed a gold bracelet gently glowing on the soldier's wrist

and frowned. The lightning hadn't seemed to affect the soldier much, he had simply just been distracted.

"Heh heh," the other soldier chuckled, turning to look at Ivan. "You honestly have no idea, do you?" He smiled and held up his wrist, which sported a similar bracelet.

"I might be getting an idea," Ivan said flatly, raising his hand toward the chuckling soldier. He closed his eyes and concentrated, calling up his Psynergy. With all the force he could muster, he cast Spark Plasma. Once the spell was over, Ivan re-opened his eyes and gasped.

The soldier he had struck was still standing, his armor not even singed. The bracelet was glowing and the soldier smirked at him, sensing his shock. Ivan backed away, shaking his head. That had been his strongest attack and it hadn't even affected the soldier.

Ivan gritted his teeth and drew his sword. He turned around and shouted at the spectating villagers, "Hurry, someone go and get Isaac and the others! I'll try and hold them off!" A few people immediately ran off to alert them. Ivan grimly turned back to face the soldiers, his expression hardening in determination.

Without a second thought, he charged at the Tolbi soldiers. He knew it was a foolish idea, considering his weakness and the fact that they would have been selected out of Colosso, which made them a formidable match, but he had to do something. One soldier lunged at him with a spear, which he dodged. Ivan slammed his foot into the soldier's side and managed to knock him off balance. The spear swung around and the wooden shaft hit him in the back.

Ivan winced from the blow and ducked aside before the soldier's spear could hit him again. He swung around to see

where the other soldier was and gasped as the other soldier's spear nicked his side. A heavy boot sent him flying to the ground.

Ivan lay on the ground, clutching his wound. Blood seeped through his fingers and he gritted his teeth, looking painfully up at the soldier as he advanced on him, raising the spear. Ivan raised the Tisiphone's Edge, barely managing to parry the blow and knock it aside. He swung the sword again as he struggled to get to his feet and heard the merciful howl of the weapon as it unleashed Vengeance.

The soldier cried out and flew back, landing on his rear and looking shocked as he realised that he had been hit. "What... how?"

"That weapon must have some power we aren't immune to," the other soldier guessed, glaring at Ivan and marching forward, raising his spear. "Prepare for your death, kid!"

Ivan was barely on his feet and his eyes widened as the soldier charged at him, spear at the ready. He managed to catch the spear with his sword and push it aside, struggling to hold it away from himself. His wrists shook with the effort. The other soldier noticed his companion's trouble and ran forward, teeth showing in a twisted grin. Ivan squeezed his eyes shut, preparing for the blow.

Thankfully, the blow didn't come. Ivan opened his eyes and saw Isaac standing over the soldier, holding up his sword. The other soldier was distracted in his surprise, so Ivan quickly ducked and rolled out of the way of his treacherous weapon.

"Ivan!" Isaac exclaimed. "Are you okay?"

"I'm okay," Ivan said breathlessly as he stood next to him and they turned to face the two soldiers who were now warily watching them. "These are soldiers from Tolbi, Isaac. They are attacking us."

"Why are they doing that?" Gareth asked from behind the two.

"Heh heh," one of the soldiers chuckled. "You don't get it yet? Well, how about giving us a taste of your power, you puny Adepts."

"Puny?" Gareth shouted as Isaac bristled. "I think you're the ones on the losing end here!"

"You want a taste of our power? Don't blame me if it hurts," Isaac said grimly, casting Gaia. The soldiers simply glanced at their glowing bracelets then back at him with a smile, even as the ground shook beneath them. Isaac's jaw dropped and he stared in disbelief.

"It... didn't work?" Gareth gasped.

"Now do you see?" Ivan asked. "Psynergy isn't working on them!"

By now, Jenna, Sheba and Felix had all arrived just in time to witness the surprising turn of events.

"It's not working?" Jenna said disbelievingly. "What are you talking about?" She turned to glare at one of the soldiers, before casting Fume. The soldier simply stared back at her. "Okay, so some soldiers came to attack us and Psynergy ISN'T working? What's the meaning of this?"

"The bracelets!" Sheba exclaimed. "They glowed!"

"These wonderful bracelets absorb your power," a soldier explained, holding up his wrist and grinning. "Tolbi's magnificent army has been given this gift so that we can carry out our master's wish."

"What is the matter with you guys? We can still take them down!" Felix exclaimed, removing his sword from his sheath. "Just use your weapons!"

"Yeah, that's what I was thinking," Gareth said, holding his weapon aloft.

The soldiers braced themselves for the fight, holding their spears and defending themselves as the Adepts charged. However, as weapons howled and unleashed while the Adepts bravely fought, the soldiers were down in seconds and lying unconscious on the ground.

"I don't understand," Isaac said. "What is the meaning of all this?"

"What Hama told me..." Ivan murmured. "It was true."

"Let's tie them up," Felix said. "When they wake up, we'll have a lot of questions to ask them."

"I have a bad feeling about this," Sheba said quietly.

"It will be okay," Jenna said hopefully. "I'm sure we can deal with whatever's coming. But it does seem like Tolbi might be up to something."

"And Tolbi's entire army?" Gareth said. "Yeah, we've got our work cut out for us, whatever it is."

3. Chapter 3

Fate of the Adepts

This story is going very slowly. Oh well, at least it still seems to be alive.

The soldiers had been securely tied up and now lay unconscious in a room in the inn, propped up against the wall. Isaac and Gareth had volunteered to stay in the room until they woke up and then they would be asking a lot of questions.

"I can't believe it," Gareth said, staring at the gold bracelet he held in his hand. They had taken the bracelets off the soldiers, just in case. "How can these guys possibly have something that protects them... from Psynergy?"

"They must have done some research," Isaac muttered. "But I suppose if Sentinel could be immune to our Psynergy, then it wouldn't be too difficult for a human to emulate it. I just wonder how they figured it out."

"Wouldn't they need... someone who could use Psynergy?" Gareth hesitated. "You know... to make sure that it worked?"

"But why would an Adept help them do something like this?" Isaac shook his head. "Unless they were being forced to... but, I don't understand why. Tolbi... why are they attacking us?"

Garet remained silent, a stricken expression on his face. He understood it no better than Isaac did.

"I guess Ivan was right after all," Isaac sighed. "That dream he spoke about, where Hama told him what was going to happen in the future, it's true." He noticed Garet's confused expression and frowned. "You don't remember?"

"Not really," Garet replied, screwing his face up as he tried to think. "When did Ivan have a dream like that?"

Isaac closed his eyes and shook his head. "You were more interested in breakfast than what Ivan had to say then. Ivan had a dream a while back, where Hama came to him. She told him that Tolbi were going to be persecuting us... all Adepts over the world... everyone was slaughtered in the future."

"Oh, yeah, I remember that!" Garet exclaimed in realisation. "And then I said we would be fine because we were superior! With our Psynergy and... well, damn..." He glared at the bracelet and clenched his fist around it as if he was trying to crush it.

"I understand the real danger now," Isaac said, looking pensive. "I was sure we were going to be alright because we have Psynergy, don't we? But Tolbi managed to outwit that. We can't beat them that way. If we're not careful..."

"What should we do?" Garet asked hoarsely.

"We'll have to prevent the bad future from happening," Isaac said in determination. "But first we need to ask these two some questions." He glanced at the unconscious soldiers, eyes narrowing. How could these people be freely attacking innocent people who hadn't even done anything to them? It just wasn't right.

After a short moment of silence as they thought about the current situation, the soldiers began to stir. Gareth was first up, drawing his sword and giving them a threatening look. Isaac stood and placed a hand on his shoulder.

"Easy, Gareth," Isaac said cautiously. "We might have to scare them into talking, but don't go overboard, ok?"

"Yeah... I know..." Gareth muttered sulkily, not even bothering to look at Isaac as his glare remained fixed on the awakening soldiers.

"Oh crap..." one of the soldiers muttered, his nervous eyes darting between Isaac and Gareth. "I really didn't see this coming..."

"No kidding, Joe," the other soldier gulped. "Look, um..."

"We're doing the talking here!" Gareth snapped. "Okay, so your friend is Joe, is he? And what about you?"

"Eric," the soldier muttered, glancing down as he found himself unable to meet Gareth's hot stare.

"Okay, Joe and Eric," Isaac said tersely, "would you two care to explain exactly why you decided to come to Vale and try to kill us?"

"We weren't going to, you know, slaughter anyone!" Joe gasped out. "Our master sent us to give you a warning, rough up a few people... but then that kid attacked us so we..."

"Why?" Gareth exclaimed. "Why would you come here and hurt innocent people? Because some big, bad guy told you to? You're scum!"

"Hey, do you really think we wanted to do this?" Eric spat. "Our families' lives are on the line here!"

"So it's okay to go out and hurt other families then?" Garet sneered. "That's just not fair!"

"Don't talk to us about fair," Eric snapped. "Tolbi is suffering! We don't have enough food, people are starving... our lord is a bloodthirsty lunatic... he'll do anything to make people obey him... we had no choice!"

"We had to do this, we really did!" Joe blurted out.

"Hold on," Isaac said quickly. "Who is... Rodan? And the Lord of Tolbi? Did this Rodan take over after Babi?" He couldn't remember having met anyone by that name when he went to Tolbi.

"Hah, no!" Joe snorted. "Iodem did!"

"Iodem was a good ruler," Eric said bitterly. "Babi made the right choice in choosing him as his successor. But then... Iodem died. And this brother of his, who had come up out of the blue, he took over Tolbi and things changed."

"So Rodan is Iodem's brother?" Isaac asked. "And you said he just came out of the blue?"

"We'd never seen or heard of this brother," Joe said. "He came out of nowhere and suddenly was being close to Iodem, even though it looked like they hadn't seen much of each other before. It was darn weird."

"This sounds a bit suspicious," Garet said, glancing at Isaac.

"Yes..." Isaac frowned. "When exactly did Rodan show up?"

"About two months after Babi died and Iodem became the Lord of Tolbi," Eric replied. "A few months later, Iodem told us that Rodan would succeed him if he could no longer carry out his duty of running the city."

"The funny thing is, not long after he named his older brother as his successor..." Joe trailed off and shivered, looking disturbed. "Iodem was found dead one morning, floating in the Karagol with a cut throat."

"He..." Isaac felt himself run cold. "That maniac... killed his own brother to gain power over a city?"

"Hey, now, nobody said Rodan did it. Or they were too scared to," Eric said, looking shifty. "Rodan made some speech to the city about how devastated he was at Iodem's death and how proud he was to carry on his task. But... he did a pretty poor job."

"He bribes, cheats and uses people in order to gain what he wants," Joe said quietly. "He will hold hostages or have criminals executed without hesitation, even without a fair trial. We barely get any food because Rodan keeps most of it to himself. And he even wants the army to go after these Adepts... I don't know why... but we're being forced to."

"Okay, I've had enough of this sob story," Gareth said tiredly. "Isaac, this sounds serious."

"Tolbi is in trouble," Isaac said, looking dismayed. "It's being run by a bloodthirsty man who's trying to wipe us out, and the people of Tolbi aren't happy... we have to do something about this."

"Yeah... what should we do with these guys?" Gareth asked.

"We'll let them go," Isaac said after a moment of thought, staring at the nervous soldiers. "We have their bracelets now, they can't do anything to us. You two will be allowed to return to Tolbi. But... if anybody else comes... we aren't going to be so nice to them."

"Yeah!" Gareth agreed. "So you tell your buddies that we will kick their asses if they try."

"Got it..." Joe croaked out.

"We swear, we won't try anything else," Eric said frantically. "Just let us go!"

Isaac and Gareth swiftly untied the ropes that bound their wrists and legs, then watched on as they hobbled out of the inn. The two turned to look out the window, watching as the soldiers hurried out of Vale without even approaching anyone.

"You think it was really okay to let them go?" Gareth asked nervously.

"Yeah," Isaac said. "The real bad guy is obviously this Rodan person. Let's go and tell everyone else what we heard. Then we decided what we have to do."

Rodan sat in his high-backed, leather-lined chair, a malevolent grin crossing his face. He raised the glass of red wine in his hand and sipped at the crimson liquid, his grin remaining fixed.

"Joe and Eric should have reached Vale a while ago," a soldier commented, approaching the chair. "I suppose they

should have no trouble down there."

"Of course not, you miserable fool!" Rodan exclaimed, lurching forward. The wine spilled over the side of the glass and trickled down onto his expensive suit. The soldier blanched and took a step back. Rodan let out a dry chuckle. "Those puny Adepts stand no chance against Tolbi's finest invention."

"The... immunity bracelets, sir?" The soldier asked, swallowing heavily. "They definitely work, don't they?"

"Of course." Rodan sneered and sat back in his chair. "That Adept we captured turned out to be useful in testing the bracelets as the sages worked on them. I wonder how he feels, down in that dungeon, all helpless now. He can't do a thing to us. Nothing!"

The soldier nodded slowly and excused himself, walking out of the throne room as Rodan's booming laughter sounded in his ears.

4. Chapter 4

Fate of the Adepts

This is coming along a little slow, isn't it? Well, we're definitely coming to the main plot soon, so it shouldn't be long now before the fic speeds up. It's just a little slow in getting there.

Isaac and Mia sat on the hill just outside Kraden's cottage, both of them thinking about what they had all learned about the situation at hand. Kraden was currently inside the cottage, studying the bracelets that were so resistant to Psynergy.

"I feel sorry for Tolbi," Mia whispered, gazing somberly at her hands which were clasped in her lap. "All those people, being ruled over by a cruel dictator. He obviously must be a nasty and cruel man."

"We're definitely going to have a word with him," Isaac said grimly. "There's no way we're going to let him wipe us all out. I swear to that."

"Ivan told me what he saw in the premonition," Mia said, looking at Isaac with wide, shining eyes. "We, you and I, we were together as a couple." She looked away, a faint tinge of pink appearing on her face. "I was pregnant with our baby. But we were killed... that child never even got a chance to come into this world."

"That is not going to happen in the future," Isaac said firmly, provoking a shocked look from Mia. "I don't mean about us becoming a couple... I meant, losing the child. If it does happen and we... you know. It will be fine. Our future is going to be okay."

"So, what do you think about us being together?" Mia asked, biting her bottom lip.

Isaac leaned back, smiling sheepishly. "I can't say I have a problem with that. But that doesn't mean we have to start now... fate runs its own course, you know."

"Yeah. We'll wait for it to happen," Mia said, looking more relaxed. "I'm sure what Ivan saw was real. I just don't want anybody to be dying in the future."

"Were there any other couples?" Isaac asked.

"Ivan only told me about us," Mia said. "I think he didn't want to say too much. The important part was telling us about the tragedy so that we could prevent it from happening."

"I don't like this waiting around," Gareth grumbled as he stomped along a path and kicked a rock, watching it skitter along the path. "I just want to get out there and beat up the bad guy already."

"You always were quick to act," Jenna sighed, walking along beside him and shaking her head. "Maybe after Kraden figures out what is up with those trinkets. But we can't just charge in there, you know. Tolbi's entire army is against us."

"I can't believe they actually have the upper hand," Gareth grumbled. "We're supposed to be the superior ones. We're Adepts! And now our Psynergy is just useless against them. How did they manage to come up with something?"

"Kraden came from there," Jenna replied. "They must have a lot of sages just like him in Tolbi. It wouldn't be too hard. Don't they have an Adept there too?"

"That's what those soldiers said," Gareth murmured, coming to a stop and looking at Jenna. "Do you suppose the Adept might be somebody that we know?"

"Could be," Jenna responded, a pensive look on her face. "But were any of them actually living near Tolbi?"

"Maybe not..." Gareth exhaled heavily. "There are so many mysteries here. It's annoying. What does that guy have against us anyway? I've never even heard of this Rodan person before!"

"Couldn't be one of Isaac's many enemies, I suppose," Jenna said, smiling slightly. "Isaac really knows how to give people a grudge against him."

"Why is it always Isaac they are after?" Gareth looked put off. "I mean, Isaac was never alone. Those Colosso warriors, sure. But the thieves in Vault... Ivan and I were helping too, but... they never mentioned them, did they?"

"Not really," Jenna said, recalling the event outside Madra where the vengeful thieves had attacked. "But, look on the bright side. This time, it's not a grudge against one person. It's against every single one of us..." She fell quiet, gazing at the ground.

"You okay?" Gareth looked at her. "You're not scared, are you? It's going to be okay. We won't die by Tolbi's hands. None of us are going to let that happen."

"If we fail, the bad future will happen anyway," Jenna whispered. "All the Adepts will get wiped out... all those innocent people who never did anything wrong. I don't want it to happen."

"Hey, I don't want it to either," Gareth said, pulling her into a comforting hug. "Be positive, okay? We're going to kick that guy's ass. No innocent people are going to die."

"Okay," Jenna said, trying to smile in spite of the worry she was feeling. The thought of everyone she loved and cared for dying was just too horrifying to think about. But they were going to make sure none of it happened. They had to succeed.

"The bracelet absorbs everything," Sheba said in a mesmerized voice as she cast Sleep upon the shining gold band upon the table. It glowed brightly as miniature sheep rained down upon it. "I've tried a lot of things on it but I can't do a single thing to it."

"And no matter where you aim at the body, the Psynergy is always drawn to and absorbed by the bracelet," Felix said, staring at the bracelet. "How is it doing that?"

"It is similar to a magnetic pull," Kraden answered as he intensely studied another bracelet, dipping it into beakers of liquid to test the reactions. "The Psynergy is pulled toward the bracelet by a strong force and then absorbed. I believe I am closer to figuring out what these are made of."

"I never even knew there was anything that could do that with Psynergy," Felix said. "Those sages must have been skilled to figure that out."

"Yes, I am quite impressed myself," Kraden said. "See how the water bubbles slightly and turns green here? This is a common reaction by a rare mineral that is only found in the Altin mines. They travelled far to get what they needed."

"Well, sounds like this Rodan guy pulls out all the stops to formulate his grand plan," Sheba said, a hint of bitterness in her voice. "Even having an Adept to test out these things. How could one of our own go along with something like this?"

"It doesn't sound like anyone there is doing these things of their own will," Felix said gently. "I'm pretty sure nobody out there would support the destruction of their own kind."

"How did they get so much information on us?" Sheba wondered. "To get an Adept... he must have already known about us and our powers. How did Rodan even know about us in the first place?"

"Lord Babi may have had information lying around," Kraden replied. "He was intrigued about those Lemurians and their power... Psynergy. He just didn't know the correct terms at the time, but from what he would have written down, it would be enough. I imagine Isaac coming along would have taught him whatever else he needed to know."

"Stupid Babi," Sheba muttered, her eyes narrowing.

"Sheba..." Felix shook his head.

"Sorry," Sheba said, glancing at Kraden who seemed slightly affronted. "So, I guess Rodan stole the information that he

had. But something must have led to it. He would probably expect to find what he needed to know in Tolbi. Isaac was pretty popular there apparently. Even fought in Colosso."

"I cannot possibly predict why he is doing this or what led to it," Kraden said, testing a small blade against the bracelet. "Maybe when you all go to Tolbi to teach him a lesson, you can ask him. Hmm, this metal seems quite strong."

"We should go soon," Felix said, wincing as Kraden proceeded to lift a hammer and slam it against the bracelet. "You seem to be having fun with that."

"Oh, but I am," Kraden said, examining the bracelet for cracks or indents caused by the blow. "This is quite fascinating indeed. I really had no idea that anything like this could exist."

"They are kind of interesting. It just sucks that they are being used against us," Sheba said. "They seem to absorb all kinds of Psynergy. When we go in there and face Tolbi's army and Rodan... weapons are the only things we have. Our Djinn could work too, but we'll really need our strength."

"Yeah. We shouldn't use them." Felix nodded. "You and Ivan are going to have to be extra careful. You're not exactly very strong attackers."

"Oh, we'll be fine," Sheba said, looking determined. "We'll all go to Tolbi and sort the bad guy out. There's no way any of us are going to lose."

A flash sounded and the sound of a shattering beaker followed. Felix and Sheba slowly looked over to see a pile of broken glass, a pool of liquid collecting underneath it. The bracelet sat on an area of hissing, bubbling liquid.

"Bad reaction," Kraden said brightly, picking up the bracelet with a pair of tongs. "It happens sometimes."

"Let's go now," Felix offered. Sheba was quite happy to do so and they hurried out of the cottage before Kraden could cause any more destruction in their presence.

Later that day, it was decided that tomorrow everyone would be heading to Tolbi.

"We don't have much time, I'm sure," Isaac said. "The more time we waste, other people could be getting hurt. After that warning, who knows what else will happen."

"I'm definitely ready to go over there," Gareth said heatedly. "If they think they can mess with us and get away with it, well, they are wrong."

"We have to be careful, you know," Ivan said. "We can't even use Psynergy."

"I'm a little nervous, but I'm sure we can do this," Mia said, clasping her hands to her chest. "We haven't got a choice."

"We should think about what we're going to do when we get there," Felix said. "I think charging in is definitely not the best plan."

"We'll think of something," Jenna said. "But for now, let's just get over there."

"It would be good to be as discreet as possible," Sheba said, looking nervous. "I don't want to take on an entire army. I'm sure there are a lot of people."

"You're right. With their immunity, we're pretty much equal," Piers said. "And we will be heavily outnumbered."

"Let's just hope it doesn't come to that," said Isaac, looking pensive. "That's the last thing we want to be doing."

"So, we'll leave in the morning then and walk there? That fine with everyone?" Felix suggested. Everyone else nodded. "Okay then. Make sure you're ready by tomorrow. We'll need the best weapons and armour we have... if we need to fight."

"So, they came back, did they?" Rodan sneered into the mirror, gazing at the reflection of a soldier standing behind him. "Those two soldiers who went to Vale..."

"They got captured and interrogated," said the soldier, staring uncomfortably at his feet. "They won't say how much they told though. But it seems that those warrior Adepts are aware of your plan."

"Really, now? I was going to wait a while to deal with those warriors," Rodan sniffed. "Pick off the weaker ones first, those weaklings scattered across Weyard, then deal with the stronger ones in that place. Vale."

"Joe and Eric are quite sorry," the soldier muttered, looking away. "But I suppose you will want them to be punished, sir?"

"Of course. Those miserable fools were only meant to deliver a little warning, not reveal my entire plan!" Rodan slammed a fist against the wall. He span around, turning away from the mirror. "Have Joe and Eric whipped and someone from

each of their families put to death. It doesn't matter who. Just put out the order."

"Yes, sir," gasped out the soldier, who hurried out of the room with a guilty look on his face.

"Pathetic," sneered Rodan, who turned back to face the mirror, eyes alighting on the severe burn marks that covered one side of his face. "I suppose it will be sooner than I thought... dealing with Babi's precious acquaintances and whatever other friends they have. I am looking forwards to it."

He reached up with a finger, touching the deep red scars, eyes narrowing in contempt. Just a working man, helping with the construction in Lalivero... then those monsters had come, those terrifying people with fire. He had been burned, his face disfigured forever. Then as he lay in hiding in case the monsters returned, he had seen his brother on the way to the lighthouse, accompanied by warriors.

Those warriors, he had suspected that they were the same as those monsters. Reuniting with Iodem, he'd got the confirmation he needed. That and Babi's information was all that was needed to begin exacting his revenge.

5. Chapter 5

Fate of the Adepts

The plot's kicking off now. Hurray for no more filler chapters!

The next morning, the Adepts were assembled at Vale's entrance, all of them readily equipped and prepared to go to Tolbi. Kraden was also present, though he would not be accompanying them to Tolbi.

"Good luck, everyone. I can tell this is going to be difficult," Kraden said, looking intently at them. "However, I am sure that you are all capable of doing this."

"There's not much we can do, is there?" Ivan asked, sounding slightly concerned. "What did you discover about those bracelets? Is there something we can do about them?"

"No. Whoever made them was very thorough," Kraden said with a heavy sigh. "They seem to be made of a combination of a resistant material as well as a special mineral that can absorb Psynergy. They also have a high density which means they can't be broken easily."

"I didn't get much of that," Garet said, looking confused. "But I guess it's all bad, right?"

"They can't break easily and Psynergy is useless," Isaac said, shaking his head. "I figured we wouldn't be able to do much

about them. Tolbi's doing everything they can to make sure they can kill us all, aren't they?"

"Well, we won't let them," Jenna declared. "Be positive, everyone!"

"It isn't going to be easy," Sheba said, biting her bottom lip. "But we have no choice."

"Let's go," Felix said, after a moment's silence. "No point in wasting time standing here."

"Farewell, everyone. Good luck!" Kraden called, as the Adepts walked out of the village. He watched as they warped out with the Teleport Lapis then closed his eyes in silent prayer. It wasn't going to be easy for them at all.

"So... we're here," Ivan breathed out, looking at the city of Tolbi that loomed in front of them. "I never thought we'd feel like this if we ever returned."

"I bet it's changed a lot with that asshole in charge," Gareth said sourly. "What is it with Tolbi and bad rulers?"

"Yeah, no kidding!" Sheba exclaimed. "Babi kidnapped me and now this guy's trying to kill us all. Tolbi's got bad luck when it comes to people running the city."

"Let's keep quiet on our opinions on the city's prominent figures, alright?" Isaac muttered as they walked into Tolbi. He looked around as they walked through the streets, trying to see what was different. Tolbi still looked mostly the same, but there seemed to be something different about the few people walking around the city.

"The people don't look very happy," Mia whispered, staring at a woman with her head bowed down as she dragged her crying child along. "That Rodan... he obviously does not care for the welfare of these people."

"Awful," Gareth said, looking at a bedraggled figure who sat on the street, looking miserable with a blanket draped over him. "What has he been doing to these people?"

As the group walked into the town centre, some of them cried out at the sight in front of them. Right in the centre of the square surrounded by buildings, where the Lucky Spring had fallen into disrepair, a tall wooden gallows stood.

Two people were suspended from the gallows, their naked bodies appearing beaten and bloodied. Flies buzzed hungrily around the bodies and a sweet, sickly smell hung in the air. The Adepts stared for a few seconds in silent horror before tearing their gazes away from the deceased who had been left in front of public eyes.

"Why?" Jenna cried out, clenching her fists. "What did those people ever do?"

A man walking past overheard and walked up to the group, looking uncomfortable. "Well, actually, they didn't. They were relatives of those two soldiers sent to some place. It was... punishment. Of course, the soldiers were whipped as well. Rodan was quite displeased about whatever happened there."

"Those soldiers..." Isaac whispered, shuddering. "He had members of their family put to death even though they didn't even have any choice? Because they failed in whatever they were supposed to do?"

"We shouldn't even have sent them back," Garet said quietly. "What a monster that guy is."

"There are soldiers coming from that palace," Piers said urgently. "They are coming toward us."

The Adepts turned and stood their ground as a group of Tolbi's soldiers approached them. They came to a stop and one of the soldiers stepped forward, eyes narrowing as he scrutinised the Adepts with suspicion.

"Warriors?" the soldier snapped. "What brings you to our city? Especially in such a large group like this?"

"If you came for something like Colosso, it no longer exists," said another soldier. "Tell us what your business here is at once."

Isaac let out a quiet sigh. They hadn't been planning on drawing attention to themselves this quickly, but it seemed that Tolbi's army had become more suspicious in recent times and they certainly had not been prepared for this suspicion.

"We just came to stay in the city and we're looking around," Felix said quickly. "We're travelling and need to rest."

"Oh, really?" a soldier said, smirking. "Because you see, our Lord Rodan told us something very important this morning."

The soldier who had spoken first nodded. "He said he was expecting a visit from warriors shortly, especially after some plan of his had been revealed and if a group of people matching this description arrived, we were to bring them to the palace immediately."

"Oh no. He's aware we know his plan?" Ivan muttered. "I think this just got more dangerous."

"Come along now," said another soldier as they began to surround the Adepts. "We shall escort you to the palace. No resisting."

There was no use in trying to resist or escape and everyone knew it, so they walked toward the palace with the soldiers, all of them feeling trepidation as they came even closer to the building where they would apparently come face to face with Tolbi's evil ruler.

"Lord Rodan!" a soldier cried, running into the throne room where Rodan sat, gazing at a scripture that lay in his lap. The soldier hastily knelt, waiting for Rodan to turn his attention to him.

Rodan rolled up the scripture and got up to walk over to place it upon a bookshelf. He turned and gave the soldier a piercing stare. "What brings you to my room?"

"A group of warriors just arrived in Tolbi, sir!" exclaimed the soldier, still gazing at the floor as he spoke. "They have just been brought into the palace as you ordered."

"I see. They may indeed be the warrior Adepts from Vale," Rodan said with a smirk, reaching up to stroke his bearded chin. "Very well. Take me to see them at once. If these are indeed Adepts, they must be dealt with. They made a big mistake in entering my city."

"Yes, sir. I shall take you to them at once," the soldier said, rising. "Please follow me." He walked hastily out of the

throne room, Rodan walking behind with a wide smile on his face. They descended the flight of stairs, heading toward the room where the Adepts were currently waiting.

"This is so uncomfortable," Sheba said awkwardly. "It reminds me of when I was taken hostage. Except this is worse."

"Yeah. These people are trying to kill us after all," Piers whispered, looking around at the soldiers who surrounded them. "We might have to fight."

"Let's just not do anything sudden," Isaac advised. "We have to try and keep our cool."

"They are all wearing bracelets," Garet commented, staring at the soldiers' wrists. "Rather prepared, aren't they?"

"Probably had to be after attacking Vale like that," Ivan said. "It seems that Tolbi expected some kind of retaliation. I think we walked right into a trap."

"We should have been more careful," Mia said, shaking her head. "Well, there's nothing we can do for the moment."

The door swung open and the Adepts looked up as a tall, dark-haired man wearing elegant robes walked in, flanked by soldiers on either side. The door closed shut behind him and he fixed his cold, penetrating stare on the Adepts.

"Warriors," Rodan said in a stiff voice, marching forward. "Welcome to my city. Normally, we would overlook visitors, but at the moment we are wary of travelling warriors. I am

Rodan, Lord of Tolbi, and I wish to know what brings you to this place."

Isaac stepped forward and prepared to speak, hesitating as he wondered whether he should lie or tell the truth. "We simply came to stay in this city. Tolbi is a fine city known for its luxury and entertainment, is it not?"

"Some would say Tolbi has been less entertaining and luxurious as of late," Rodan said, sneering slightly. "At least, ever since I came to rule. I see no point in pampering people. So you indeed only came to stay here?"

"Yes, that is all," Isaac replied quickly, inclining his head in a slight nod.

"Where do you warriors hail from?" asked Rodan, folding his arms across his chest. "Your names as well, please."

Isaac went quiet, frantically racking his brains. They should have thought of this. He was famous enough that people would know who he was. To say he came from Vale would also incriminate them.

"Your silence is suspicious, warrior," said Rodan, a smirk spreading across his face. "I've heard talk of a blue-eyed teen with spiky blond hair who goes by the name of Isaac. That would be you, wouldn't it?"

"Great, so people don't just need my name to know who I am?" Isaac said sourly, taking a step back. "There's no point in trying to lie."

"All of you are Adepts, aren't you?" Rodan chuckled, amused at the ease in which he had exposed them. Babi had written in great detail about those Adepts who were meant to save his life, weak as he was at the time, and he had easily picked

the four out among entering the room. "I knew who some of you were upon entering this room. Plus, there has been talk of strange people with blue hair. It was easy to tell who you were."

"Okay, you know who we are. Big deal," Gareth said crossly, staring in annoyance at Rodan. He was unimpressed with the way he talked for so long. "Just tell us why you're planning to kill us. What did we ever do?"

"See my face?" Rodan hissed, pointing at the scars that covered part of his face. "This was caused during a terrible incident that innocents like I were caught up in. An incident that we had nothing to do with."

"An incident?" Ivan echoed. "And this has to do with Adepts?"

"I was once just an ordinary man with a home in Suhalla, working to earn my pay in Lalivero when they were building a lighthouse for Babi," Rodan continued speaking. "One day, while we were just working and minding our own business, these monsters with fire came storming through. They attacked all those who stood in their way, even mere bystanders were caught by the raging flames coming from their hands!"

"Do you have to go on and on?" Gareth grumbled, wincing as a soldier threateningly waved a spear in his direction and shook his head. "Yeesh... sorry."

"People were injured, someone even killed in that rampage! Then there was a blue-haired man who came out of that lighthouse and beat up many of Tolbi's finest soldiers. The worst thing of all, this travesty went unpunished! Those people with fire and water went on doing what they liked, harming people in their way, and got away with it," Rodan

snarled. "My face was forever scarred. One of my friends couldn't walk for weeks. Because of these Adepts."

"So that's all it is?" Isaac said coldly. "A petty grudge?"

"That's unfair!" Felix cried. "It's not like anybody had a choice! You people were getting in the way-"

"Silence!" Rodan snapped. "After what I've seen, those demonic people with red eyes and fire coming from their hands with which they harmed people, it was clear to me. You Adepts can no longer be allowed to roam this world. We're going to purge it of filth like you!"

"So you think we're the bad guys, huh?" Gareth scowled.

"We saved the world!" Jenna cried. "If we'd just backed down at every turn, then Weyard would be eroding away even now."

"So we're being punished because of what happened at Venus Lighthouse and Lalivero?" Sheba shook her head. "Can't you at least let us explain-"

"I don't want explanations, I want justice!" Rodan raised a fist. "Soldiers, take these Adepts to the dungeon at once!"

"He's not listening to us, is he?" Mia shuddered as the soldiers begin to shove at them. "This isn't good. Isaac, what are we going to do?"

"We're surrounded by soldiers," Isaac hissed through gritted teeth as the Adepts were escorted out of the room. "There doesn't seem to be much we can do."

Ivan felt his heart sink as the soldiers led them toward the stairs leading down to the dungeons beneath the palace.

Had they just made a terrible mistake?

6. Chapter 6

Fate of the Adepts

The gineau pig Adept will finally be revealed... and no, it isn't Piers. He's been with everyone else the whole time. He's just... very quiet. That was completely unintentional. I tend to forget about him sometimes, he's not all that memorable...

"This is definitely not good," Isaac said, staring despondently at the row of steel bars across the cell. It was a wide cell, enough to fit eight people inside, so the Adepts had all been put in together. That was at least one thing they could be thankful for.

"It's rather dark in here," Ivan said, sitting in front of the cell door and looking around. "The light from the torches on the wall don't reach very far. However, I can't think of a way to break out."

"It's no good," Sheba said bitterly, wrapping her arms around herself and shivering slightly from the cold. "Even if we got out, the Tolbians would probably just cut us down. How can we escape? The dungeons are right under the palace."

"I think Ivan might have thought of something," Mia said, looking at the thoughtful Jupiter Adept. "You have an idea, don't you?"

"If it was dark enough," Ivan said, turning around with a pensive expression on his face. "We might be able to sneak out."

"Won't we still be seen by guards though?" Piers asked, frowning as he tried to make sense of what Ivan was saying. How could they possibly be so easily missed in the dark? The guards would be on constant watch.

"Lunpa's fortress," Isaac said suddenly, looking surprised. "Of course. If it was dark enough, then that could work, couldn't it?"

"What are you talking about?" Jenna asked, sounding irritated. "Care to share your plan with the rest of us?"

"How are we even supposed to get out?" Felix asked pensively. "The cell is a lock and key system. We can't break the lock because it's outside and we don't have the key."

"Well, yeah, that's the major flaw in this plan," Ivan said, shaking his head. "We should still have the Cloak Ball. It would hide us in the shadows, but if we can't even get out, we can't use it."

"Oh, man," Gareth sighed, slumping against the wall. "How are we supposed to get out of here?" He despondently looked up at the ceiling. After a moment of staring, he frowned. "Hey, what's that square thing?"

"I think it must lead to a vent," Mia replied, glancing up as well. "Hey... if there's a vent, we can use that, can't we?"

"It's risky," Ivan said. "Still, if someone could get up there and look around..."

"Then, just do it!" Jenna exclaimed. "We don't want to die!"

"Calm down," Felix said quickly, trying to soothe Jenna's fraught nerves. "We're not going to die. We won't let them kill us."

"I'll go," Sheba said, standing up. "I'm small and light. Nobody will hear me crawling around in there." She held up the Hover Jade, looking determined. "I can use this to get up there easily."

"Garet, you have the Orb of Force, right?" Isaac asked urgently. "Use force on the vent cover to knock it away."

"Got it," Garet said, getting to his feet. He put out his hands and flashed with Psynergy as he cast Force. A beam of light shot out and struck the vent, knocking away the cover to reveal a wide square hole. "Okay, I did it!"

"Be careful," Piers said as Sheba stood underneath the hole. "Don't let anyone hear you."

"I know," Sheba said, nodding. She took a deep breath and cast Hover. The Psynergy spell propelled her into the air for a second. In that second, she was able to grab onto the side of the hole and pull herself up. "Alright, I'm in," she said, looking down at everyone. "I'll be back soon."

"I hope this works," Mia murmured, staring anxiously at the vent hole. "If it doesn't, we might be done for."

"We have done very well indeed," Rodan said, chuckling as he paced past a row of soldiers who watched him intently. "Putting away those evil Adepts. I never imagined I would have all of them locked away so soon, awaiting their deaths."

"Do you have any orders for us?" asked a nervous looking soldier. "I mean, anything we have to do?"

"It's fine. Just leave them there for now while I decide what I shall do to them," Rodan said, waving a hand dismissively. "Of course, you can't let them escape. Who knows what kind of powers they have? Breaking out of jail may be easy for them."

"We will watch them most carefully, sir!" said another soldier, hastily curtseying as he spoke. "They will not be allowed to escape."

"However," Rodan said suddenly, clicking his fingers, "those bracelets that the sages worked so hard to make, they seem to work, otherwise those Adepts would have tried to fight their way out. That... makes our test Adept useless now."

"The man we tortured and forced to test the bracelets?" asked a soldier, swallowing as he recalled the things they had put that man through, simply so he could help to ensure the destruction of his race. After so many threats and the sheer pain, the Adept had simply given in.

"Give him a glorious, painful death," Rodan said, chuckling. His eyes glinted as he thought of it. "Then show his body to those Adepts we captured, give them an idea of what is to come. Seeing one of their own in such a state... it will drive the fear into their hearts. They will have no choice but to accept their fate."

"Yes, sir!" several soldiers exclaimed.

"Now, go!" Rodan pointed to the door. "Get that Adept and torture him to death. Show him to the other Adepts. Make sure they know what a painful death it was!"

Sheba scrambled through the narrow vent, shivering as she imagined she felt a spider brushing against her arm. She pushed away the feeling, telling herself she couldn't get scared now. This was a serious situation, everyone was depending on her to find a way out of captivity. Otherwise they would be done for.

As she passed over another vent door, she heard a soft groan. Sheba froze in her tracks, startled by the noise. They had seen other people in the cells as they passed, mostly huddled lumps sitting in corners. Letting her curiosity get the better of her, she peered through the small holes, catching sight of someone lying on the floor.

The person was curled up in a ball, their face pressed to the steel floor of the cell, and their long hair was a tangled mess. The clothes upon the figure were thin and worn through with ragged holes.

Sheba gasped quietly, her pulse quickening in realisation. She couldn't tell who it was, but it was a person with blue hair. Could it possibly be a Water Adept? Was he the Adept the Tolbians had used to make those bracelets? She gripped the door, quietly pulling it away, and levered herself through the opening, dropping to the floor.

This was dangerous, she knew it, but she had to talk to the Adept. As Sheba came closer, she kneeled next to the mysterious person and leaned closer. The person stiffened and turned his head to look at her. Even with the bruises and cuts upon his face, he was immediately recognisable. Sheba backed away with a shocked cry.

"Alex!" Sheba cried in disbelief. "What are you doing here?"

Alex stared at her for a moment, then he painfully whispered, "Sheba?" His voice sounded dry and pained. "So... does that mean they got all of you as well? They... got me a while ago."

"How?" Sheba asked, shaking her head. "Last time we heard of you, the Wise One said you were climbing Mt. Aleph, then he went to go and deal with you. We didn't know what happened after that."

"It was a miracle... I survived..." Alex smiled faintly, his blue eyes flickering away as he looked thoughtful. "I fell... clear of the mountain somehow... I was crawling for days, starving, injured... I honestly thought I was going to die."

"And?" Sheba pressed.

"Some travelling merchants found me and were nursing me back to health..." Alex muttered. "They had no idea... of who I was. Their travels took us past Tolbi and that's where... monsters attacked."

"Monsters attacked?" Sheba repeated. "Then... did you fight the monsters?"

"That was a big mistake," Alex murmured, closing his eyes. "Soldiers from Tolbi... were coming to their aid, they must have heard the cries... I was still injured, but had just enough strength to cast a little... Psynergy. A weak spell, but still..."

"So the soldiers saw what you did?" Sheba bit her bottom lip. "They captured you?"

Alex nodded slowly, wincing as pain shot through him at the motion. "I was too weak... to save myself. I still am. They

forced me... to test those bracelets... beating, torturing me... I had no choice. I just wanted to put an end... the pain."

Sheba gritted her teeth, a sudden surge of fury running through her. "So you betrayed us all by doing it? Just so that they wouldn't hurt you anymore? It's always all about you, isn't it, Alex?"

"You have no idea!" Alex spat, his expression hardening. "No idea... how painful it is..."

"Now thanks to you, they have the perfect defence against our Psynergy," Sheba said coldly, getting to her feet. "How could you do something that would mean the death of us all?"

Before Alex could speak, footsteps sounded in the hallway, coming toward the cell. Sheba turned and moved to stand underneath the opening, quickly casting Hover. She pulled herself back into the vent, turning briefly to look down. Sheba heard the sound of the door opening and watched in surprise as Tolbi soldiers rushed in. They grabbed Alex and dragged him out of the cell.

"Alex," Sheba whispered. What were they going to do to him? Trying not to think about it, she continued on her way through the vent and eventually discovered an opening above the tunnel outside the cells. A soldier paced underneath, keys jangling from his belt. Now that she had found the way back, it was time to return. Sheba hurriedly crawled back toward the cell where everyone was being held.

"I just can't believe we're getting punished for what Saturos and Menardi did," Gareth said, sighing as he sat down again. "How is that fair?"

"I know," Jenna grumbled, moodily staring at her knees. "It's not like any of us did anything. They did all the work, burning everyone in their way. Those people were trying to stop us too."

"They can't exactly punish the dead, you know," Felix said, looking at Garet. "But it is unfair. That guy wouldn't even listen to us either."

"After what he must have seen, I guess we can't blame him," Isaac murmured, shaking his head as he recalled all the unconscious people lying on the ground between Suhalla Gate and Lalivero. "If only we could talk."

"We need to put a stop to what Tolbi's doing," Mia said quietly, her expression serious. "Our lives can't end that way. I don't want them to."

"Mia." Isaac put a consoling arm around her and held her close. "Don't worry, we'll figure something out. Hama showed Ivan the future so we could prevent it from happening."

"I doubt she expected us to wind up imprisoned in Tolbi's dungeon," Ivan said bitterly. "We're probably going to die even sooner."

"Thinking like that won't get us anywhere," Piers said severely. "Be positive. I'm sure we haven't failed. Perhaps Hama even foresaw this."

"I guess..." Ivan murmured. "I just wonder if she meant for us to do things differently. If I've failed her, I don't think I could live with that."

"Man, what's taking Sheba so long?" Jenna asked impatiently. "She's been gone a while."

"Hopefully coming back with a great escape plan," Gareth said. "Sitting in this cell really makes me feel nervous. Jail sucks."

"I seem to have an affinity for jail," Piers remarked. "It's quite unlucky, isn't it?"

"No kidding," Felix said. "I think I could do with a little more luck myself."

"Hey, I'm back!" Sheba's voice called down from the vent hole. Everyone looked up as Sheba dropped down into the cell. She looked around with a shaky smile. "Everything went pretty much okay."

"Are you okay?" Mia asked. "You seem a little pale."

"Did you find anything out?" Gareth asked anxiously.

"I'm fine," Sheba said quickly, expelling a heavy breath. "The vent does lead to a way outside of the cells. I also saw a guard nearby with keys on his belt."

"Well, that sounds pretty promising," Ivan said. "Now we should work on a plan with the new information we have."

The Adepts clustered together, whispering in hushed voices as they began to discuss the escape plan. Half an hour later, they had figured something out and were now sitting and waiting as Tolbi soldiers came marching toward their cell.

"Look here, Adepts," a soldier said, chuckling as he looked at the imprisoned group. "We have a little gift for you."

The Adepts curiously looked through the bars as more soldiers moved into view. Some of them cried out in horror as the soldiers held up a body covered in blood. Vacant blue eyes stared up at them, unblinking.

"Alex..." Mia whispered, shaking as she put a hand over her mouth.

"Oh, did you know him?" asked the soldier, laughing uproariously. "This man was tortured and beaten for weeks, testing our lovely bracelets for us. Wasn't he nice, securing the destruction of your kind?"

"Alex was the test Adept?" Isaac whispered. "I can't say I'm surprised."

"Yeah. Alex was scum anyway," Gareth said, looking away from the bloodied body. "First he tries to take the power behind our backs and then he helps with Psynergy proof devices. Ugh."

"This man was useless," the soldier spoke again, glancing at Alex. "So we took him away and tortured him to death. Even as he died, he was still screaming in pain. This will be your fate, Adepts. To suffer... and eventually die."

"How horrible," Ivan whispered as the soldiers dragged Alex away. "To torture someone to death. Sure, it may have been Alex, but to them, he could well have been one of us. They tortured him to death."

"We're going to get out," Isaac said determinedly. "So that doesn't happen to us. The plan can't fail."

"I can't believe Alex did that," Mia said, slowly shaking her head in disbelief. "Betraying us all. It would have been better for him to die!"

"Maybe they wouldn't let him die," Sheba murmured, leaning against the wall as she stared blankly into space. They really had no idea what Alex had been put through. Perhaps he really had no choice.

7. Chapter 7

Fate of the Adepts

Now... how will the Adepts perform The Great Escape? Of course, things will be far from over.

"Man, I'm starving," Gareth moaned. He was currently slumped against the wall with a glazed expression on his face. "It must be long past lunch now. Aren't they bringing us any food?"

"Of course not. Did you really expect them to?" Felix asked in an exasperated tone. "They want us to suffer, don't they?"

"What's the use of a cloaking device that only works in the dark anyway?" Jenna asked, looking accusingly at Isaac. "Couldn't we come up with a better plan?"

"Hey, it's not my fault Babi gave us such a useless trinket," Isaac protested. "Well, it's not that useless. It's useful if you're sneaking through a fortress to save a hostage for one thing. And... er..."

"Crossbone Isle," Ivan supplied, anxiously peering through the bars. "It's really not the best plan we have but I can't think of a safer way to get out of the palace. I just hope we're not going to be taken anywhere before nightfall."

"What are we going to do if we escape?" Mia asked. "We came here without a real plan in mind and we couldn't even talk. Do we simply try to kill Rodan?"

"Even if he thinks his actions are justified, he seems like a bad person to me," Piers said. "Look at how he's running this city and punishing innocent people. If we were to bring him down, it would not just be for us, but for the people of Tolbi."

"You're right. What we saw, it was horrible," Sheba said, looking sad. "Even when I was a hostage here, I could tell Tolbi was a happy place and now... it's just depressing. Rodan is an awful ruler."

"I think he only took over the city so he could take control of the army and tell the sages what to do," Isaac said. "He possibly murdered his own brother to get the position. Rodan never cared about the people. He just wanted to go after us."

"So that's what we have to do," Ivan said. "There may be soldiers loyal to him, but there shouldn't be too many. Taking out the leader of a city would be a risky task."

"Let's get out of here first then think about how we'll do that," Gareth said, clutching his stomach. "Hasn't anybody got any food?"

"We didn't bring any," Piers said. "When we get out of here, we'll eat something. Try to be a little more patient."

"At least we aren't going through whatever Alex did," Felix murmured, recalling the horrendous sight that the Tolbi soldiers had shown them. "That look on his face... it was awful."

"He looked like he was screaming," Jenna said, shuddering. She closed her eyes and shook her head, trying to dispel the image. "Even after everything he did, I feel bad for him. They must have put him through so much."

"Well, I suppose you can find consolation in the fact he's at peace now," Mia said, sounding slightly bitter. "I've still not forgiven him for everything he did and especially this. A traitor to the end. That was Alex."

Time seemed to be standing still as the Adepts continued to wait, talking all the while as night came closer. Excitement and nervousness began to mount as the hours passed and they watched the guards who walked past, taunting them at every possible opportunity.

"Hey, do you want to know something?" a guard jeered, tapping on the bars. "We had a beautiful sunset. I swear, the sky turned red. To us, it symbolised all the blood that will be spilt for the sake of justice. Our leader is very excited about it."

"So, the sun has set?" Isaac asked casually, refusing to rise to the bait though Gareth couldn't resist throwing a nasty look at the guard.

"Why, yes, it has," replied the soldier. "What's wrong, are you sad to know you'll never get to see another sunset? You won't be seeing the light of day again because you'll be waiting here to go and receive the deaths you deserve."

The Adepts fell silent, waiting for the soldier to walk away then they all looked at each other in understanding. It was almost time for the plan to be executed, but they would wait a little while longer until they were sure the palace would be quieter and they wouldn't be so easily noticed sneaking out.

After what seemed like endless hours of waiting, Isaac finally announced, "I believe it's time."

"Finally!" Jenna exclaimed. "I don't want to spend any longer in this horrible cell than I have to."

"You remember everything you have to do?" Felix asked Sheba, looking anxious.

"Yeah," Sheba murmured, feeling a knot in her stomach. She was feeling quite nervous. Anything could go wrong. The plan could fail and they would be trapped. If that happened...

"Good luck," Ivan said, breaking off her thoughts. "We're counting on you to do this."

Sheba took a deep breath as she hovered up into the vent. The Adepts waited with bated breath as she disappeared, praying that the plan would go successfully.

Sheba clambered through the dark tunnel, biting her bottom lip as she reached the vent hole. She had to be careful. For a moment, the Jupiter Adept closed her eyes and whispered a silent prayer, readying herself to begin the plan. Then she lifted the cover and peered through.

The guard with the keys was standing nearby. There were no soldiers in the vicinity, so she wouldn't be seen. Sheba lifted the cover again and brought it down sharply, making a clanging noise. The guard frowned in puzzlement and walked underneath the opening, looking around for the source of the noise. Sheba flung out a hand and cast Sleep.

The soldiers had made a serious error. The person with the keys was of a lower rank. He'd probably never even been meant to fight an Adept. They wouldn't have that many

bracelets in stock, so they wouldn't waste them on an insignificant person. Soldiers were watching the cells, so the person's job was simply to stand there with the keys. Which meant he had no bracelets.

Sheba smiled as the guard fell to his knees in a deep sleep. Without hesitation, she leaped down and grabbed the keys off his belt. Then she looked toward the corridor that led past the rows of cells where two soldiers were pacing around and keeping watch. They hadn't heard the noise and couldn't see her, concealed by a wall.

The next step was to use one of her Djinn. Sheba called for Haze to use its power to conceal her in the darkness. The Jupiter Djinni did so, allowing her to sneak toward the soldiers without being seen. She raised her mace and slammed it into the back of one soldier's head, knocking him unconscious. The other soldier looked around in surprise upon seeing his comrade fall to the floor. The last thing he felt was a heavy impact with the back of his head before he also fell unconscious.

Sheba sighed in relief and hurried toward the cell, the keys jangling in her hand. She immediately unlocked the door, pulling it open.

"Okay, guys," Sheba said. "I did it."

"Good job, Sheba!" Mia smiled.

"Cloak Ball time, then?" Piers asked, as the Adepts hurried out of the cell.

"Remember to be quiet and stay away from light," Isaac warned. "We must be in the shadows at all times."

Everyone nodded in unison. Satisfied, Isaac cast Cloak, concealing everyone within the shadows. They hurried past the fallen soldiers and up the stairs into the palace. At night, the palace was quiet and there were few people around. The only light was supplied by a weakly flickering torch at the far end of the room. The Adepts quietly walked to the door that served as the entrance to the building.

"There may be soldiers standing at the door," Ivan said quietly. "They will see the door being opened."

"We'll attack quickly but without making noise," Felix whispered. "Prepare yourselves."

The soldiers turned around as the door opened. Immediately, Isaac and Gareth leaped out the door, slashing at them with the most powerful blows they could muster. The soldiers moaned and fell to the ground as the Adepts quickly walked past.

"We're out of the palace," Mia whispered. "Thank goodness."

"Now what are we going to do?" Gareth asked. "Should we go back to Vale?"

"I'm not keen on leaving Tolbi for the moment," Isaac said. "Rodan seems to like punishing innocent people. What if he uses our escape as an excuse to hurt the citizens?"

"He might blame them for us getting away," Jenna said. "Though won't we be in danger if we stay here?"

"Not if they don't know," Felix said. "I think we can persuade someone to hide us while we decide how to get to Rodan. Maybe we should at least try the inn?"

"That would be the last thing they expect," Ivan murmured. "Though it seems foolish, but they are probably going to be searching the wild for us. They wouldn't think we stayed right in the city, would they?"

"And we can tell the innkeeper not to tell anybody we're there," Sheba said. "I think we'd be a little worried leaving this city in a madman's hands. Besides, the best way to figure out how to get to someone is to stay nearby, isn't it?"

"Okay then," Isaac said, nodding in determination. "Let's quickly get to the inn without being seen. Then we'll work on a plan for tomorrow. One thing's for sure, Rodan must be stopped and we have to save Tolbi too."

The Adepts quickly sneaked through the city, unseen by the few soldiers patrolling the street, and hurried into the building that served as Tolbi's inn. A woman was sweeping the floor by the desk and was startled by their entrance.

"Oh my goodness, visitors? At this time of night?" the woman gasped. "We so rarely get visitors anymore. Tolbi's got a bad reputation now. It's not good for business at all. Hold on, you are warriors?"

"That is correct," Piers said.

"Then you are the group that Lord Rodan had arrested?" the woman asked, moving behind the counter. "You wish to stay here for the night?"

"We escaped from the palace," Ivan confessed. "Please don't tell anybody that we're here. We're working on a plan to bring down Rodan, and if it succeeds, Tolbi will be saved, as well as many other innocent people."

"Please accept this money," Isaac said, putting down a large bag full of coins. The woman stared at the bag in amazement.

"Thank you so much!" the woman exclaimed. "Yes, you can have a room. I swear I won't tell anybody you are here. I can tell you are good, kind people. Rodan is such an evil man." She shook her head. "Take any of the rooms downstairs, they are all empty after all."

"What luck," Felix said as everyone walked downstairs. "I suppose everyone wants to see Rodan gone."

"I'm not sure I'll even be able to sleep tonight," Jenna moaned. "Being in a city where we're being persecuted makes me nervous and I still can't get that memory of Alex out of my mind."

"I know what you mean," Sheba sighed. "At least we won't be spending the night in a cell."

8. Chapter 8

Fate of the Adepts

I think I'm about to get the feeling this thing is going in circles. Yikes.

"Just the three of us here, huh?" Ivan bounced on the bed, a slightly nervous expression on his face. "I guess they really didn't want too many of us going out there. But what are we supposed to do in the meantime?"

"I don't think there's much we can do here," Sheba sighed, sitting next to him. "But they are trying to find a better way to infiltrate the palace, like a passage or something, so it might be easier to get to Rodan. Taking the front entrance would be suicide."

"I hope they don't get found," Mia murmured, biting a fingernail anxiously as she thought of Isaac out there in the dangerous city. "After escaping, the soldiers are probably going to be looking out for us all."

"Well, at least the innkeeper agreed to hide us here," Ivan said, looking hopeful. "So I guess we won't get found, but Isaac and the others are going to have to be really careful. Though I'm not sure they should have taken Gareth with them."

"That's true, he'll probably make some unnecessary loud noise and bring all the soldiers running," Sheba quipped, smirking as she made her joke. "But if they get into a scrap, he is useful to have around."

"Excuse me, I'll be right back," Mia said, walking to the door and opening it. She looked back at them. "I just need to use the facilities, but I'll come straight back." Ivan and Sheba nodded as she left the room.

"What does that say about us then?" Ivan mock pouted, though he wasn't as offended as he pretended to. "Though, we are more useful for Psynergy than attacking and Mia wasn't needed, since they have Piers and Jenna with them so we all just stayed here."

"The less people you have, the easier it is to sneak around," Sheba reasoned. "Our Psynergy doesn't work either so it's not like we can do much against those soldiers. Still, it's kind of boring stuck in here, but hey, I'm used to it in this city."

"Hopefully they will find an easy way into that palace," Ivan said, looking thoughtful. "Taking down Rodan won't be very easy though, I bet he has a few guards to defend him. Still, we have to try. An evil man like that can't be allowed to live."

"We're not really going to look very good taking down a figure of great importance in this place," Sheba said ruefully. "But I bet he's badmouthed us a lot already. I just hope people understand why we did it... we could be punished for it."

"Not everyone is like Rodan," Ivan said, though he did seem somewhat nervous. "We'll try and explain, but it's pretty clear he's treating the people poorly and they know it, so I think they will appreciate us if we get rid of him."

Mia had just finished using the facilities and stepped out of the room, turning to head back to the bedroom. She stopped in her tracks as she heard several heavy footsteps coming down the steps. Her eyes widened and she turned around. Those heavy footsteps could surely only mean one thing.

A group of Tolbi soldiers came round the corner and stopped, staring at the shocked Imilian. Mia backed away, her face paling. They knew who she was, there was no point in trying to make an excuse, but how could they possibly have known about her and the others being here in the inn?

"We didn't expect to find you lot so fast," a soldier said, chuckling. "But when we put up that ransom notice for a fine sum of money, that man was quick to tell us you were all in his inn. His wife was foolish to think she could hide you all and get away with it."

"Don't bother trying to run," said another soldier, approaching her. Mia cried out as he gripped her arm. "You're coming with us back to the palace. You," he looked back at his group. "Go find the others."

"They went out," Mia said, gritting her teeth as the soldiers began the search. Would they find Ivan and Sheba too? Her heart pounded against her chest as she watched them go between the rooms. Staying behind had been a bad idea after all. Who would be able to warn Isaac and the others?

"Can't find anyone," a soldier said finally. "Guess she was the only one here."

"It doesn't make sense," said a confused looking soldier, glaring at Mia. "Why would one of them be left here all alone?"

"I'm sure she knows where they are," the soldier holding Mia said, pulling her as they began to walk away. "We'll just have to get it out of her back at the palace."

Mia stumbled slightly as she was dragged along, a feeling of dread and nervousness growing inside her. Their plan was probably screwed up now with her being captured. Hopefully Ivan and Sheba could warn them not to come back. She swore she would not tell the soldiers what Isaac and the others were up to, they would never get that information from her.

"This isn't good," Ivan said, crawling out from under the bed. "I think they got Mia."

"At least we heard them in time," Sheba said, also emerging. "If they had got us too, we wouldn't have been able to go and warn Isaac. We'd better go and find everyone."

"Right," Ivan said, nodding. "Now we have to rescue Mia from the soldiers as well. I just hope she'll be okay."

The two hurried out of the room and went upstairs to the inn's lobby, startled to see a distraught man holding a woman in his arms. The woman was covered in blood and unmoving. They recognised her as the one from the night before who had let them stay.

"What happened here?" Ivan asked, looking horrified.

"I just wanted the money," the man murmured, shaking his head in disbelief as he stared at his wife's face. "I didn't think they would kill her. I told them... we needed the money... they did this to her..."

"Ugh. You're pathetic," Sheba said, looking angry. "We paid extra to that woman to hide us and you had to go tattle to the soldiers for more. You're greedy!"

"I don't think it's greed, Sheba," Ivan whispered. "Come on, let's go."

"But how could he do that?" Sheba cried as Ivan led her out of the inn. They remained close to the wall as they moved around, looking out for the soldiers. "All we needed was a safe place to hide while we worked out a plan."

"But the people are suffering," Ivan argued. "They must have offered a lot of money to find us and people in this place need money and food to survive. He knew where we were, he could take advantage of the offer and help himself and his wife."

"They killed his wife because she hid us, didn't they?" Sheba asked quietly as the two hid behind a wall while approaching the city's outskirts. They needed to reach the palace without being seen. "Again, someone dies and it's our fault."

The two walked in silence toward the palace in hiding, feeling relieved when they reached the back and had not yet been discovered by the soldiers. Isaac's group were behind the palace, trying to figure out if they could get in from the back of the palace somehow.

"Hey, you guys," Jenna said, catching sight of Ivan and Sheba. "What are you doing here?"

"Where's Mia?" Isaac asked, looking at them in surprise. "You didn't leave her alone in the inn, did you?"

"Mia's been taken!" Sheba said in a rush. "That woman's husband told the soldiers where we were for the ransom money and... they caught her..."

"We hid in time when we heard them," Ivan said tersely. "But Mia didn't have a chance. They just took her away."

"Great!" Gareth hit a wall with his fist, looking annoyed. "Now one of us has been captured again. Why can't we just have a little good luck for once?"

"So, if we can get back into the palace somehow, we have to save Mia as well as get Rodan somehow?" Felix mused. "This could be tricky."

"Mia..." Isaac looked agonised. "We'd better hurry and save her! What if those soldiers hurt her?"

"Be calm, Isaac," Piers said. "It won't do any good to lose your head in this situation. We must think of the best way to rescue Mia without interfering with our objective."

Before anyone else could speak, a Tolbi soldier came around the back of the palace and caught sight of them. His eyes narrowed and he marched toward them, immediately recognising them as the Adepts who had escaped. "Hey, you!"

Fortunately, the soldier was taken down with little effort before he could alert anyone else to their presence. Isaac looked down at the fallen soldier, a pensive expression on his face.

"What are you thinking of, Isaac?" Felix asked, staring at his face.

"I think I have an idea," Isaac said. "What if I put on the soldier's armour and pretend to be one of them? We could get into the palace easily that way."

"Are you sure?" Garet asked, looking surprised. "But what about us?"

"It's simple," Isaac said. "I'll say I captured you all and then they will take us to where Mia is, but I can keep the disguise on... it might even be a good way to get to Rodan."

"That's pretty impressive," Jenna said, smiling. "Of course you would come up with such a good idea, Isaac."

"Sounds like a plan," Felix said. "You'd better hurry and do it before anybody else catches us."

"Right," Isaac said, kneeling next to the soldier and removing his armour. "I guess I had better wear those horrible bracelets too."

"It would be a giveaway if you didn't," Ivan said, sounding sympathetic. "All the soldiers have them."

Mia stood against the wall, shivering with trepidation as three soldiers faced her, looking equally fierce. Rather than taking her to the dungeons, they had taken her to a small room, presumably to ask questions. She was quite sure they were planning to get information on Isaac and the others out of her.

"Where are your companions?" a soldier demanded, slamming a hand into the wall next to her head. "Tell us at once!"

"I'm not telling," Mia said, pressing her lips together and looking stubborn as she stared defiantly back at the soldier.

"Foolish girl," growled another soldier, grabbing her shoulder and pressing her against the wall. "Do you realise you will suffer the consequences if you don't tell? Rodan wouldn't mind. He wants scum like you dead after all."

"I don't care," Mia whispered, unwilling to show the fear building up inside her. She would rather suffer than tell them where Isaac was, she couldn't betray her friends, but death was not something she wanted. She wanted to live. "I'm never going to tell."

The soldier with his hand on the wall sighed and stepped back, shaking his head. "Must we force this out of you? You had better tell us before we are forced to persuade you."

"You can do whatever you want to me," Mia said shakily. "I'm not betraying Isaac."

"I guess we'd better... persuade her..." said the third soldier, chuckling derisively as he eyed up Mia. A chill trickled down her spine as she watched his roving eyes.

"This is your last chance," growled the soldier who was holding her by the shoulder. He moved his hand and grabbed her by the neck. "Tell us," he hissed, squeezing.

Mia closed her eyes and prayed for Isaac to come and save her, trying not to struggle for breath as she was slowly choked. She would show no fear or desperation. Eventually, she started wheezing and struggling as tears formed in her eyes. The soldier let out a sniff of contempt and released her, allowing her to breathe.

"Fine then, let's persuade her, shall we?" the soldier by the wall said, grabbing Mia and flinging her to the floor.

"This should be fun," said the third soldier, grinning as he advanced on the terrified Imilian.

Before any of the soldiers could do anything to Mia, the door opened and another soldier walked in, glancing at her.

"The Adepts have been found and captured," said the soldier. "They are being held in a containment room. I am to take the girl and put her with them."

Mia couldn't help letting out a sigh of relief though she was horrified that Isaac and the others had been found. She'd even been trying so hard to protect them. She numbly allowed the soldier to grab her and lead her toward them, wondering how they could have let themselves be caught.

Isaac stood by the door, feeling quite uncomfortable as he glanced at the soldier standing at the other side. The door was locked and the other soldier had the keys. Thankfully, he had been allowed to keep watch over his friends as he had been the one to 'find' them. The other soldier could be dealt with easily.

With the Adepts having escaped from the dungeons before, the soldiers were not taking any chances with them. Now they were being locked in a room, watched by two soldiers. The other soldiers of course did not realise who Isaac was and somehow hadn't noticed his absence either which was just as well. Hopefully Rodan wouldn't come to check on them.

A knock sounded on the door. The soldier unlocked it and it swung open, revealing a soldier holding Mia. Isaac inwardly sighed with relief as he saw her, glad to see that she was okay. Mia was roughly shoved inside and the door slammed shut. Isaac anxiously watched as Mia went to rejoin the others while the soldier locked the door again.

"Are you okay, Mia?" Jenna asked in concern as she shakily sat down with them. "You weren't hurt, were you?"

"I'm fine," Mia said quickly, smiling. "Just. They were about to do things to me. But... how did you all..."

"We were caught," Gareth murmured. Speaking more quietly, he added, "Kind of."

Mia looked around, her eyes widening. Before she could ask, Ivan brought a finger to his lips, warning her. She frowned in puzzlement.

"Isaac's over there," Felix whispered. "He's masquerading as one of them."

Mia looked over and spotted Isaac wearing soldier's armour. She turned away, feeling relieved. So Isaac was alright and this was apparently planned. "You did this to save me?"

"Of course," Sheba said. "We've got to stick together."

Isaac got to his feet, swallowing in nervousness. The soldier did not even look up. He silently drew out his sword and in a flash, he stepped over and slit the soldier's throat in a swift move. The soldier let out a gargled cry and slumped over.

"We've got to act quicker," Isaac said nervously. "I don't think we can do this alone."

"He's right. There's no time," Piers said. "They are going to execute us tomorrow morning."

"But we've thought of something," Jenna assured, as Mia paled.

"Okay, Ivan, come here," Isaac said, pulling the keys off the soldier's belt. "We're counting on you. Everyone, I'm going to be locking you in from the outside so that they don't get suspicious. I'll be coming right back."

"I'm ready," Ivan said, walking over. He patted his pocket which held the Teleport Lapis. "Let's do this."

Isaac quickly walked out with Ivan and locked the door. Then they hurried out of the palace. Soldiers did not even look up as Isaac pretended to drag Ivan along, though when they stepped outside, the soldiers on guard immediately asked where he was going.

"He slew one of the soldiers in duty in the containment room," Isaac answered. "It was a hidden weapon. We did not see it coming. I'm going to be dealing with him. The other Adepts are locked securely inside and cannot possibly escape."

"Very well," said a soldier. "Give that little rat the painful death he deserves."

"Do they have to be so insulting?" Ivan protested as the two walked toward the city's exit. "It hurts."

"It also hurts that we could be executed tomorrow morning, but we've got to prevent that from happening," Isaac said, as they stepped out the city. "Okay, hurry." He glanced around, making sure nobody could see them.

"Alright," Ivan said, holding up the Teleport Lapis. "I'll see you soon."

Isaac watched as Ivan teleported out, swallowing nervously. This would work. Of course it would. He turned and walked back to the palace, looking pensive. Even with Silk Road unblocked, it could still take a while. They were counting on this to work, and that meant help had to come in time.

9. Chapter 9

Fate of the Adepts

And now we're at the final chapter. This chapter was quite fun to write up.

It was early in the morning, the sun having just risen, but already the population of Tolbi had been dragged out of their beds and were gathered in the city square. Their earnest gazes were fixed on the gallows at the centre, where several soldiers were assembled. Apparently, another public execution was taking place by orders of their lord.

"People of Tolbi," Rodan spoke out, standing on the platform and gazing out at the city dwellers. "This morning, I have all called you out to watch a public execution, as I am sure you have figured out by now. These people... they are criminals."

The people gasped and began talking among themselves. Rodan stopped and watched them, smirking. How easy it was to have people on his side, no matter how much he neglected or mistreated them. They would respect someone running their city, someone watching over them. Even if he cared little for the people, they still listened.

"These criminals committed many crimes," Rodan shouted out, his expression hardening. "They are different to us, they have evil powers! You may not believe that, but it is true... they used these powers, abusing normal people like us, and

they got away with it. Remember the Venus Lighthouse incident? They stormed through, hurting people in their way, and just carried on... unpunished."

The people gasped in shock, stirred up in excitement by Rodan's words. They were quick to believe him, stunned by hearing of people with strange powers, and even worse, using these strange powers to hurt ordinary people. The Venus Lighthouse... the attack on it, the lighting, they mostly remembered it. Many soldiers had been hurt, mostly by fire.

"However, that's not all!" Rodan shouted. "In fact, not only did these people, or... Adepts, as they call themselves, harm people... but one of them, a young man named Isaac... do you remember that name?"

"Isaac was the one who won Colosso last year!" someone shouted. Many people in the crowd nodded in agreement, recalling how Isaac had got to the finals and beaten Navampa in a tough match, winning Colosso.

"That is correct," Rodan said, grinning. "And since Isaac is an Adept, do you know what that means?" Gasps of shock rose up from the crowd. "That's right! He must have used his powers to overpower those ordinary warriors and win... in fact, he cheated!"

As the crowd shouted and booed, Rodan was unaware of one of the soldiers behind his back glaring and gritting his teeth in annoyance. Isaac lowered his head and sighed in frustration. He was getting fed up of being accused of cheating in Colosso. Why couldn't everyone understand Psynergy was a warrior's power too?

He knew what Rodan was doing. Rodan was turning the Tolbians against them, painting them as wrongdoers so that

the people would be cheering as they were executed. Isaac swallowed heavily, trying to ignore the nervous feeling in his gut, and glanced over his shoulder at his friends. They were standing in front of the steps onto the platform from behind, surrounded by soldiers.

Where was Ivan? Isaac looked back, nervously looking at the entrance to the city. Surely he should be here by now. What if he didn't get here in time? Isaac clenched his fists, perspiration forming on his brow. His friends would be executed in a matter of minutes, and him too, if his disguise was uncovered. They couldn't fight their way out with all the soldiers around and Tolbi's people turned against them.

"Bring up the criminals!" Rodan ordered, looking at the soldiers. Isaac was shoved aside as the soldiers on the platform moved to make room. The blond Venus Adept tensed as the other Adepts were led onto the platform and stood there, facing the crowd. The ropes on the gallows hung threateningly in front of them.

"No..." Isaac whispered, shaking his head. His body started trembling of its own accord as he stared in dismay at the gallows and then his companions. If Ivan didn't get here in time... what should he do? Take down Rodan from behind and hope the soldiers wouldn't attack? That was foolish but... they were running out of time.

What was he meant to do? He'd led them into that castle in the hope of infiltrating and taking down Rodan, then come up with that plan. It had all hinged on Ivan, leaving everything to chance, and Ivan wasn't here yet. All their hopes had been pinned on him. Isaac shuddered, a hand moving toward the hilt of his sword at his hip.

Even if they died, he still had to take down the man behind the scheme. Without him, the army would be indecisive, not knowing what to do. Rodan was orchestrating everything, controlling people through fear and threats. Isaac stared at Rodan's back, his throat going dry with nervousness. He had to do something, save the other Adepts in this world.

"Wait a minute," Rodan said, glancing at the Adepts. He carefully scrutinised them and frowned. "Where is Isaac? He is not here!"

"Isaac's not here?" one of the soldiers asked, looking confused. "We had no idea. We assumed they had all been caught."

Rodan frowned in annoyance then turned away, clenching a fist. "I'll get him later then. But wait, if Isaac is not here, but all his friends who came with him are... this can only mean one thing. He abandoned them!" He grinned, gazing at the crowd who were looking truly scandalised. "Isaac is a selfish coward who left his friends to die!"

Isaac gripped the hilt of his sword, gritting his teeth in fury as he prepared to pull it out. The soldiers would pay little attention to him in this disguise. He could easily take the man down, even if to bring down someone from the back was a cowardly move. Isaac couldn't take any more of listening to Rodan insulting him like this, turning everything around...

"Now let's hang them all!" Rodan shouted, grinning as he turned away and looked at the scared Adepts. The soldiers started moving forward to push them onto the trapdoors below the hanging ropes.

"No!" Mia cried out, throwing a frantic look over her shoulder at Isaac. Her eyes were filled with tears and her entire face

was a mask of terror. Isaac's insides turned cold at her expression and he almost cried out her name.

Then something happened to prevent any further action. A horn sounded and horses stampeded into Tolbi, flanked by soldiers running into the city with weapons. The Tolbians cried out and scattered as the soldiers advanced toward the gallows.

"This is Kalay's army!" a mounted soldier on a horse shouted, approaching the platform. "We are here to save friends of Lord Hammet. You are ordered to back down immediately or else we will have to fight."

"Kalay?" Rodan sneered in disgust. "What business is this of theirs? Nothing will stop me now, not when I'm so close! Soldiers, attack!"

The platform almost cleared completely as the soldiers ran off the platform to do battle with Kalay's army. Only four soldiers were left along with Rodan, who laughed as he watched the battle around him.

"Nothing will stop me... nothing..." Rodan whispered in a crazed voice, a wide grin stretched across his face. He did not hear the footsteps behind him but he felt the glancing pain shoot through his back. Rodan coughed up blood and craned his neck to see who appeared to be a soldier standing behind him, their sword in his back.

The soldier tore out the sword and threw aside his helmet, glaring at Rodan. "That's enough out of you!" Isaac shouted, kicking Rodan from the platform. Rodan screamed in rage as he fell to the ground and collapsed, lying still on the ground.

"Isaac!" Mia cried out, running to fling her arms around him. She quietly sobbed in relief as Isaac hugged her back.

"Thank goodness... I was so scared... I thought we would die."

"It's not over yet," Felix said, as the remaining soldiers backed away from them in shock. "The soldiers are still fighting."

"We haven't got weapons," Piers said. "We'll have to get them off the fallen soldiers and fight."

"Yes, we should help Kalay after all," Jenna agreed. "They came all this way to save us."

"That was so close," Sheba sighed, as they hurried off the platform. The Adepts quickly grabbed what they could and jumped into the fray, doing battle with Tolbi's soldiers alongside Kalay's soldiers.

The battle ended sooner than was expected. With Rodan fallen, Tolbi's army no longer had a leader and they realised that was what they had wanted all along, for Rodan's cruel influence to be removed. Their families had been threatened, they had been forced to do things, their loved ones had been harmed. Ever since Rodan came to rule, food and water had been scarce and people were rapidly becoming homeless. It was clear Tolbi was suffering because of Rodan.

As a result, most of the soldiers had backed down and surrendered to Kalay's army. Those who were loyal to Rodan and continued to fight were quickly brought down, outnumbered as they were. Finally, the city was quiet as the battle ended. Soldiers lay in the street, of both Kalay and Tolbi, and those who lived quietly observed the results of the battle.

The Adepts regrouped in the square, near the treacherous gallows where they had almost come to an end, all of them smiling in relief as they saw the outcome of things. They had won this battle.

"It worked out after all," Isaac said, clutching Mia's hand tightly. He didn't want to leave her side for a minute. "We got through this. Everyone is safe now."

"I wonder where Ivan is," Sheba said, looking around. "Maybe he didn't come with the army. I'm sure he'll come soon though. He'd better explain why they got here at the last minute though."

"I was expecting them a little sooner too," Piers said, folding his arms across his chest. "But it was at night after all. I suppose travelling would be slightly more difficult in those conditions. At least they got here in time."

"And now Rodan's gone," Gareth said, glancing over his shoulder at the fallen lord. He hadn't moved since falling off the gallows. The Mars Adept turned away and smiled. "All the other Adepts are safe now too. Nobody will have to die."

"It's kind of sad though," Jenna said, sighing as she gazed at the bodies around her. "So many innocent people were killed... and these soldiers, they believed Rodan... they let him lead them on to their deaths."

"Well, at least no more people will die," Felix said. "We got rid of Rodan. I just hope Tolbi can pick a better lord next time."

As they all stood together, watching the soldiers and the people of Tolbi wandering around, none of them were looking at the gallows or the ground where Rodan lay. They assumed that he was dead, slain by Isaac's sword.

Rodan twitched, an eye creaking open and staring at the nearby group. He gritted his teeth in anger, fury surging through him. Those cursed Adepts had deceived him and ruined his grand plan to take them all down. That Isaac had cheated, dressing up as a soldier and taking him down from behind.

How foolish of Isaac, thinking he had slain him like that. He could not be defeated so easily and he refused to back down now. Rodan struggled painfully to his feet, gazing at their backs as he reached for the sword in his belt. His mouth stretched into a grin as he pulled it out and began to advance on them. He would take down the closest one first...

Sheba suddenly had the foreboding sense that something was about to go terribly wrong. Her power of foresight had grown enough for her to know what it was and she swallowed, slowly turning to see Rodan approaching Jenna from behind, grinning as he raised his sword. There was no time to act.

"Jenna, look out!" Sheba screamed in warning.

Jenna whirled around, time seeming to slow down as she looked into Rodan's crazed face and saw the glint of the sword as it prepared to come down on her. With no time to do anything, she could only raise her arms and scream as the weapon started to come down on her.

The sword came slashing down, striking through flesh, and a pained scream split the air. The sound of a body hitting the ground followed.

Jenna fell to her knees, her eyes widening in horror as she gazed at Gareth who lay in front of her, groaning as he bled from the wound Rodan's sword had dealt to him. "Gareth!"

she cried out in shock, frantically placing her hands over the wound in an effort to stop the bleeding.

Felix ran forward and slashed with his sword, striking Rodan through the chest before the lord could do anything else. Rodan let out a gargled cry and fell back, blood bubbling from his mouth. A slash to the throat finished him off and he went still.

"Damn it, Isaac, couldn't you have finished him off properly?" Felix yelled, turning around to look at Isaac.

Isaac pressed his lips together, biting back a retort. He knew Felix didn't mean to hurt his feelings, he was just upset at seeing his sister almost be killed by Rodan. Isaac turned and watched anxiously as Mia and Piers ran to heal Gareth. Luckily, the wound wasn't too serious.

"Ugh," Gareth said, getting to his knees. "Taking the blow sure is painful."

"Gareth..." Jenna let out a sob and threw her arms around him. "Why did you do that? You scared me... I thought..."

"I couldn't let you be hurt, could I?" Gareth hugged her back, smiling. "I'd do anything to protect you, Jenna."

Jenna tearfully gazed up at him, biting her lower lip. "You'd even let yourself get hurt... to save me..."

"Hey, guys," said a familiar voice, interrupting the moment. Everyone turned to see Ivan approaching the group, looking around at the scene. "I guess everything worked out then."

"Barely," Piers said. "Kalay's army turns up right before we get hung and then Rodan needs to be taken down twice before he finally dies."

"But at least we won," Mia said happily. "Rodan's gone and the soldiers who remained loyal to him were taken down by Kalay. It's finally over."

"Sorry it took so long," Ivan said, looking slightly chagrined. "Hammet was out on business and didn't get back until about an hour after I arrived, and the army needed to get ready after he told them to go and save you all. Nighttime isn't easy to travel in either, but at least they made it in time."

"It's thanks to you, Ivan, that we're all alive," Isaac said. "And we're grateful to Lord Hammet for immediately sending out the army too. We should go to Kalay and thank him in person."

"Yeah, let's do that," Gareth said, getting to his feet along with Jenna. "I haven't been to Kalay in ages. Maybe we'll get a free meal."

"Do you always have to think about your stomach?" Sheba sighed.

"Well, I think he might at least deserve one," Felix said. "For his crazy heroics, anyway."

"At least I didn't nearly fall to my death this time," Gareth muttered. Jenna grinned and clutched his hand.

"Thanks, Gareth," Jenna said. "I'm glad you saved me. A blow like that would have been pretty nasty. Just try and be a little more careful, okay?"

"What did I miss?" Ivan asked, looking confused.

"Gareth jumping in front of Rodan's sword as he tried to take Jenna down from behind," Piers answered.

"Let's go to Kalay now, ok?" Isaac asked. Everyone nodded in agreement and they went to leave Tolbi, triumphant in their victory and knowing that all the Adepts in the world, them included, were safe now.

After coming over to thank Hammet, the Adepts were asked to stay in Kalay for the day, and Ivan also wished to spend some time in the city, so they had happily obliged. Vale could wait a little longer to hear that they were all safe and sound. So now, for the moment, they were relaxing in the city and recovering from the trials of the past couple of days.

Isaac sat on a bench next to Mia, gazing thoughtfully at the sky. Mia glanced at him, noticing his serious expression.

"Hey, Isaac," Mia said, tilting her head. "What are you thinking about?"

"Rodan said a lot of stuff to the Tolbians," Isaac said regretfully. "He probably managed to convince a few people we were evil incarnate. I'm not sure how Kalay coming to save us made us look... but it's disheartening to think there are people who might believe him."

"He did say a lot, didn't he?" Mia shook her head and sighed. "But I'm sure we can fix the damage somehow. Maybe when Tolbi gets a new lord, we can talk to them and sort it out... I'm sure they will end up with a decent ruler who listens to people."

"They deserve it after all the trouble they have gone through," Isaac said, nodding. "I took down their cruel ruler too. I'm sure they will see the justice in it, even after everything they heard."

"It was scary, wasn't it?" Mia murmured, gripping her dress with her hands and crumpling the fabric. "I really thought I was going to die then. The people were shouting at us and there were ropes dangling in front of us. It was terrifying."

Isaac glanced at her, recalling the look of fear on her face and the tears in her eyes when she looked back at him. He'd wanted nothing more than to run and save her at that point. "Mia," he spoke, causing her to look up.

"What is it?" Mia asked, gazing at him.

"I want to protect you," Isaac said, taking her hands in his. "When you were taken by the soldiers and then when you were all about to be... executed... I was so worried. I couldn't bear it to see you in danger again. That's why I want you to stay by my side so I'll take care of you."

"Isaac..." Mia whispered, her eyes shining with tears. "Of course we'll stay together... I want to be with you too. Let's always be with each other."

The two melted into a soft embrace upon the bench, their arms wrapping around each other as they kissed. They both swore never to be apart again.

Ivan walked along the street, gazing around at the city. He felt relieved, knowing that the future would be peaceful. The Adepts were safe from danger. Kalay had definitely helped out, thanks to his idea of asking Hammet for aid. In the end, it had been too difficult alone and he knew Kalay's army were strong and capable of facing another. It had been a tricky situation, but one that worked out well.

"Hello, Ivan," said a familiar voice, pulling him out of his thoughts. Ivan stopped and looked in front of himself, his eyes widening as he saw the person who spoke. Hama stood there, smiling at him.

"Hama," Ivan said, gasping and rushing over to her. "Why are you here?"

"I figured I'd see you here," Hama answered. "Well done. You managed to overpower Rodan in the end."

"It was a bit complicated though," Ivan said, biting his lip. "We kept getting captured and if I hadn't asked for Kalay's help in time, then everyone would have been..."

"You tried your best," Hama said gently, placing a hand on his shoulder. Ivan looked up at her with a pained expression. "And it worked out, didn't it? You can't expect to defeat a powerful foe without going through some trouble."

"I guess so," Ivan said, smiling faintly. "The future... it will be a good one, won't it?"

"There will be no more trouble from Tolbi in your lifetime," said Hama. "But don't expect a trouble-free future. Anything could happen."

"Right." Ivan nodded in understanding.

"While I'm here, I suppose I'll go say hello to Hammet," Hama said. "Let's go see him."

"Alright," Ivan replied, smiling as they walked to the palace. With Tolbi no longer a threat, the future had been saved. At last, he could relax somewhat.